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SIPDIS

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E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [JO](#)
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION ON IRAQ AND U.S.-SYRIA
STANDOFF

Summary

-- Lead stories in all papers today, April 16, focus on developments on Iraq's domestic front. Front-page headlines highlight Iraqi demonstrations against the U.S. in some Baghdad neighborhoods and the death of 10 Iraqis by Marines' fire. Reports also highlight the Iraqi opposition meeting. Other lead stories focus on the escalating tension between the United States and Syria.

Editorial Commentary

-- "Stop asking for new glories"

Daily columnist Jamil Nimri writes on the back page of independent, mass-appeal Arabic daily Al-Arab Al-Yawm (04/15): "During this war, the Arab people stood against the invasion, except for the one people who actually fell under that invasion, for they wanted to get rid of what they were suffering from.. After this recent shock, would it be right to ignore those methods of domestic rule that are justified on the pretext that they confront foreign intervention? Would inflaming emotions with fiery, high-noted pan-Arab and Islamic speeches and feeding hopes of regaining the glory of the nation justify ignoring the oppression and corruption and stepping on of individual citizens.. We do not want any single leader to decide to drag us into confrontations. Only governments elected by elected parliaments would decide such a thing, so that people can bear the responsibility, whether negative or positive.. Commenting on the objectives of imperialism and Zionism in our region and for our people is masked idleness that seeks to exempt us from holding ourselves accountable for what we are in. Is it logical that a regime would wage two destructive useless wars?"

-- "Syria in the bull's eye"

Daily columnist Urayb Rintawi writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (04/16): "All of a sudden, the Syrian file is opened: Damascus harbors figures from the collapsed regime in Baghdad; Damascus harbors terrorist organizations and supports others; Damascus produces weapons of mass destruction and conceals Iraqi chemical weapons. What is being said in Washington today has definitely been said in Tel Aviv before.. War on Syria seems farfetched for a number of reasons. First, Syria is not Iraq, and this is not in terms of military power, but rather in terms of political and diplomatic aspects. Syria has close relations with many Arab, Muslim and European countries and its relations with the United States, despite their tense and tepid nature, are based on cooperation and coordination. Second, Syria is not Iraq, because the nuance in Syrian diplomacy can be amazing. Third, Washington, despite the ongoing escalation against Syria, still finds room and potential for dialogue and cooperation with the Syrian leadership. For all these reasons, we believe that the American campaign against Syria will not go beyond political and diplomatic pressures."

-- "The Arab world is required to support Syria now"

Daily columnist Bater Wardam writes on the op-ed page of center-left, influential Arabic daily Al-Dustour (04/16): "U.S. intentions towards Syria are clear. It took but one day after ensuring the collapse of the Iraqi regime in Baghdad for America's aggressive statements against Syria to start, using the same false accusation: weapons of mass destruction. These American statements raised tension and suspicion in the Arab world, but at the same time, they removed any doubt or misunderstanding regarding U.S. intentions,

which are aggressive and seek to guarantee full protection for Israel."

-- "The freedom to loot and steal"

Daily columnist Fahd Fanek writes on the back page of semi-official, influential Arabic daily Al-Rai (04/16): "One of the strangest explanations for the looting and stealing that occurred in Iraqi cities was the U.S. Secretary of Defense's statement that what happened was the outcome of the end of the era of oppression and the beginning taste of freedom brought by the Americans, and that these actions are considered natural and interim aspects of moving from the dictatorship era to the liberation era.. The American occupation forces encouraged the looting and stealing, not only to cover up their own looting and stealing, but also to strike against the Iraqi people, to break them and to destroy their self-worth and their national pride. If America meant to strike the regime, then the regime is now gone. America wants to confiscate the possibility of establishing an Iraqi state, so that the American occupation becomes a requirement and the American leadership a refuge."

GNEHM